

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MEXICO 01568 01 OF 03 051705Z

46

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EA-07

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2847

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 MEXICO 1568

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MX

SUBJECT: CURRENT LATIN AMERICAN PERCEPTION OF THE U.S.

REF: STATE 10605

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR JOVA

1. SUMMARY: SENIOR MEXICAN OFFICIALS, OBVIOUSLY BETTER INFORMED AND MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN MOST MEXICANS, IN DISCUSSING WATERGATE OR REVELATIONS CONCERNING U.S. INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES SOMETIMES ASK US, "WHY DO YOU (AMERICANS) DO THIS TO YOURSELVES?" NEVERTHELESS, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT SUCH FACTORS AS THE OUTCOME IN VIETNAM, WATERGATE, OR THE INTELLIGENCE REVELATIONS HAVE HAD ANY SIGNIFICANT OR LASTING IMPACT ON MEXICAN PERCEPTIONS OF U.S. STRENGTHS AND VULNERABILITIES. MEXICO CONTINUES TO EXPECT THE U.S. TO LIVE UP TO ITS INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND OTHER COMMITMENTS (THOUGH AVOIDING "ANOTHER VIETNAM"). ONLY SOPHISTICATED MEXICANS UNDERSTAND THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM AND EXECUTIVE-CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS. EVEN THIS SMALL GROUP PROBABLY OVERESTIMATES THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE. WE SEE NO MAJOR CHANGE IN TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE U.S., THOUGH THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY CRITICAL OF MANY ASPECTS OF U.S. POLICY. MEXICO MAY BE PRIVATELY UNEASY ABOUT CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA BUT IS PROBABLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT U.S. CREDENTIALS TO  
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SECRET

PAGE 02 MEXICO 01568 01 OF 03 051705Z

CRITICIZE INTERVENTIONISM. MEXICO HAS BEEN A LEADER IN URGING

LATIN AMERICAN AND THIRD WORLD UNITY VIS-A-VIS THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES AND USES COLLECTIVE POSITIONS TO BOLSTER BILATERAL INITIATIVES, BUT MEXICAN INTERESTS (BILATERAL) ARE ALWAYS PLACED FIRST. VOTING POSITIONS OF MEXICO IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS HAVE BEEN TROUBLESOME TO THE U.S., BUT THESE REFLECT A MORE ACTIVIST, CONSCIOUSLY "INDEPENDENT" ROLE UNDER ECHEVERRIA THAN ANY CHANGE IN PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. MEXICO IS NOT TURNING TO ANOTHER NATION TO REPLACE THE SUPPORT OF THE U.S., THOUGH IT SEEKS TO REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON U.S. WE DO NOT FORESEE ADVERSE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES FOR THE U.S. AS A RESULT. MEXICAN RHETORIC QUESTIONS U.S. WILL (NOT ABILITY) TO MEET NEEDS OF THE LDC'S, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT IN FACT, U.S. GOOD WILL IS ASSUMED, DESPITE RHETORIC. END SUMMARY.

2. IN REVIEWING WITH THE COUNTRY TEAM YOUR EXTREMELY INTERESTING QUESTIONS CONTAINED IN REFTEL, I FIND THAT THE QUESTIONS ALLOW SUFFICIENT SCOPE TO COVER THE GENERAL THEME THOROUGHLY. OUR VIEWS, KEYED TO THE QUESTIONS IN REFTEL, FOLLOW. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WHEN WE REFER TO MEXICAN OPINION, THE REFERENCE IS TO THE VIEWS OF POLITICALLY AWARE SECTORS OF PUBLIC OPINION. MOST MEXICANS WOULD NOT HAVE WELL-FORMED VIEWS ON VIETNAM, WATERGATE, OR OTHER ISSUES OF CONCERN TO US IN THIS TRENDS REVIEW. BUT WE SHOULD ALSO POINT OUT THAT A CONSENSUS IS HARD TO FIND, EVEN AMONG THE POLITICALLY SENTIENT. GOM OFFICIALS INVOLVED WITH FOREIGN AFFAIRS SOMETIMES SEEM TO VIE WITH EACH OTHER IN CRITICIZING THE U.S. -- THOUGH EVEN THIS GROUP IS NOT HOMOGENEOUS. OTHER GOM OFFICIALS (IN "TECHNICAL" AGENCIES) ARE FAR LESS OUTSPOKENLY CRITICAL. INTELLECTUALS AND ACADEMICS (THOUGH WE MAINTAIN GOOD COMMUNICATIONS WITH THESE CIRCLES) ARE FREQUENTLY HOSTILE OR PREJUDICED ABOUT THE U.S. FINALLY, BUSINESS AND BANKING GROUPS SEEM TO KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE U.S. AND TO BE COMPARATIVELY WELL-DISPOSED. THEY ARE ALSO THE MOST ANGUISHED AT OUR "SELF-FLAGELLATIONS" AND AT INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY REVELATIONS, ETC.

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 01568 02 OF 03 051708Z

46

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2848

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 MEXICO 1568

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR JOVA

3. A. LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF J.S. STRENGTHS AND VULNERABILITIES (DISCUSSED IN DETAIL BELOW) ARE, WE THINK, AS FOLLOWS. MEXICANS CONTINUE TO CONSIDER THE U.S. THE STRONGEST POWER ON EARTH, BOTH MILITARILY AND ECONOMICALLY. THEY MIGHT SEE SOME VULNERABILITY IN THE U.S. PROCLIVITY FOR AIRING INTERNAL DIFFERENCES AT THE TOP OF YOUR VOICES. MEXICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. ARE PROBABLY MORE COMPLEX THAN IN MANY COUNTRIES BECAUSE OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS ARE SO COMPLEX, BECAUSE OF OUR GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY AND THE SUBSTANTIAL LEVEL OF CULTURAL INTERPENETRATION, BECAUSE OF THE FREQUENTLY DIRECT IMPACT OF U.S. DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS ON MEXICO, AND BECAUSE OF THE HISTORY OF U.S.-MEXICAN RELATIONS. IT IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE BUT COMMON FOR MEXICANS SIMULTANEOUSLY TO HOLD SEEMINGLY INCOMPATIBLE VIEWS OF THE U.S.: AS THE "IMPERIALISTIC" OPPRESSOR WHO TOOK HALF OF MEXICO'S TERRITORY; AS THE FRIENDLY NEIGHBOR WHO OUGHT TO MAKE SPECIAL NEIGHBORLY CONCESSIONS TO MEXICO; AS THE MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGICAL CULTURE; AS A CRUDE AND VIOLENT SOCIETY, ETC. MEXICANS MAY HAVE READJUSTED DOWNWARD THEIR ESTIMATE OF THE U.S. AS A MILITARY POWER SINCE VIETNAM; THEIR PRE-VIETNAM CONCEPT OF U.S. POWER, HOWEVER, WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY DISTORTED AND U.S. CAPABILITIES WERE OVER-ESTIMATED. VIETNAM WAS CLEARLY SEEN AS A MAJOR DEFEAT FOR U.S. POLICY, AND THE UNSEEMLY HASTE WITH WHICH MEXICO ESTABLISHED RELATIONS WITH BOTH NORTH AND SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 MEXICO 01568 02 OF 03 051708Z

SOUTH VIETNAM, THE RECENT DONATION OF MATERIALS FOR VIETNAM'S RECONSTRUCTION, AND THE REPEATED CHARACTERIZATION OF VIETNAM BY PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS AS AN "HEROIC VICTIM OF FOREIGN AGGRESSION" REVEAL SOME SATISFACTION WITH THE OUTCOME IN VIETNAM AND LITTLE OR NO SYMPATHY FOR THE U.S.' EXPERIENCE. WATERGATE FASCINATED MEXICANS, BUT IT WAS NOT FULLY UNDERSTOOD. MOST FOUND IT INCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT A GOVERNMENT SHOULD SO WASH ITS DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC; MEXICANS-- WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE UNUSUALLY WELL-INFORMED AND PERCEPTIVE--SEEMED TO CONCLUDE THAT THE NET RESULT OF WATERGATE (IN ITSELF REGARDED AS TRIVIAL "PECADILLO") WAS SIMPLY A WEAKENING OF THE U.S., FAILING UTTERLY TO PERCEIVE THE RESILIENCE AND STABILITY OF THE U.S. SYSTEM AS REVEALED AND CONFIRMED BY WATERGATE. SIMILARLY, MEXICANS (PARTICULARLY

THOSE OF CONSERVATIVE BENT) FIND IT HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE U.S. SHOULD REVEAL DETAILS OF ITS INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS. ATTITUDE ON THIS SUBJECT, HOWEVER, ARE COLORED BY AN ELEMENT OF SUSPICION AND APPREHENSIVENESS OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF COVERT OPERATIONS IN MEXICO. MEXICANS RESENT THE U.S. ROLE IN CHILE AND TEND TO DISREGARD FINE DISTINCTIONS AND, INDEED, SOME FACTS. IN MEXICAN EYES, THE U.S. WAS "INVOLVED" IN THE FALL OF ALLENDE, AND THE AMOUNT OF U.S. FUNDS SPENT, THE EXACT NATURE OF SUPPORT GIVEN TO OPPOSITION GROUPS, THE DENIALS BY HIGH U.S. OFFICIALS ON SPECIFIC ACCUSATIONS ARE NOT GIVEN TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE. MEXICANS ACCEPT MUCH MORE READILY THE MORE LURID IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM LEAKED TESTIMONY OR DOCUMENTS OR THE CHARGES OF A CONGRESSMAN HARRINGTON OR A DANIEL ELLSBERG THAN THEY DO STATEMENTS BY PRINCIPAL U.S. OFFICIALS OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. NOTWITHSTANDING THE ABOVE, WE SHOULD POINT OUT THAT SOME CONSERVATIVE MEXICAN SECTORS BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. WAS INVOLVED IN THE FALL OF ALLENDE AND APPROVE SUCH INVOLVEMENT; THEY SEE THE U.S. AS THE LAST BULWARK AGAINST COMMUNISM.

B. THE OUTCOME OF VIETNAM AS A DETERMINANT OF MEXICAN VIEWS ON U.S. ABILITY AND WILL TO LIVE UP TO INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE. VIETNAM PROBABLY DID RAISE SOME DOUBTS ON THIS SCORE, BUT MEXICANS SEEM TO SEE VIETNAM AS A TERRIBLE MISTAKE AND ABERRATION IN U.S. POLICY AND THEIR DOUBTS MAY NOT GO BEYOND A BELIEF THAT THE U.S. WILL NOT INVOLVE ITSELF IN ANOTHER VIETNAM REGARDLESS OF COMMITMENTS. MEXICANS EXPECT THAT THE U.S. WILL LIVE UP TO SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 MEXICO 01568 02 OF 03 051708Z

SPECIFIC TREATY COMMITMENTS TO MEXICO. VIEWS ON U.S. ABILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO LIVE UP TO SECURITY COMMITMENTS ARE, PERHAPS, NOT TYPICAL OF LATIN AMERICA. MEXICO'S GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION GIVES IT AN OUTLOOK MINIMIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS. THE RELEVANT SECURITY COMMITMENT IN THIS CASE IS, OF COURSE, THE RIO TREATY, AND MEXICO IS CONCERNED MORE OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE U.S. MIGHT ACT UNDER THE RIO TREATY AND ON HEMISPHERIC SITUATIONS IN A MANNER MEXICO WOULD NOT APPROVE THAN THAT THE U.S. MIGHT FAIL TO ACT. IN SOME RESPECTS, MEXICANS SEE IN VIETNAM THE VINDICATION OF THEIR BELIEF IN THE "SINFULNESS" OF INTERVENTIONS; IN THE FUTILITY OF FORCE AND THE NECESSITY FOR NEGOTIATION TO AVOID THE USE OF FORCE.

C. ON SOME ISSUES, WELL-INFORMED MEXICANS DO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN CONGRESSIONAL AND EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY IN THE U.S. AND PERHAPS HAVE SOME RESERVATIONS AS TO EXECUTIVE CAPABILITIES.

D. MORE GENERALLY SPEAKING, EVEN WELL-INFORMED MEXICANS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS VERY WELL AND TEND TO CREDIT THE U.S. EXECUTIVE WITH GREATER AUTHORITY AND CONTROL VIS-A-VIS THE CONGRESS THAN IS IN FACT THE CASE. (THEY IDENTIFY THE EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH

THAT IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY WHERE THE CONGRESS IS A RUBBER STAMP AND ITS LEADERS SPOKESMEN FOR THE GOM.) TO THIS EXTENT, THEY MAY SEE U.S. EXECUTIVE ACTION--WHEN IT FAILS OR IS THWARTED BY CONGRESS--AS HALFHEARTED OR INSINCERE. UNFORTUNATELY, MEXICANS TEND TO OVERESTIMATE THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS AND APPARENTLY SEE LITTLE NEED IN MEXICAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR SERIOUS AND THOROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF THE U.S.

E. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE U.S. HAVE OCCURRED IN MEXICO OVER THE PAST TEN OR FIFTEEN YEARS. THERE HAS BEEN SOME SHIFT, OF COURSE, RELATED TO MEXICO'S MOVE TOWARD THIRD WORLD MEMBERSHIP UNDER THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION, BUT WE DO NOT CONSIDER MUCH CHANGES FUNDAMENTAL AND ECHEVERRIA'S THIRD WORLD ACTIVISM IN ITS FULL VIGOR MAY NOT SURVIVE HIS TENURE IN OFFICE.

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 01568 03 OF 03 051734Z

46

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2849

S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 MEXICO 1568

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR JOVA

F. MEXICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA ARE INTRICATE AND MIXED. FIRST, THE U.S. REACTION TO CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IS NOT OF PRIMARY INTEREST OR SIGNIFICANCE IN MEXICAN EYES. AS IN THE CASE OF CHILE (ABOVE), FINE--OR NOT SO FINE--DISTINCTIONS TEND TO BE IGNORED. CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA IS EVIDENT, BUT SO IS U.S. MONETARY SUPPORT TO THE OTHER SIDE, AND MANY MEXICANS ALMOST CERTAINLY BELIEVE THAT MERCENARIES TRAINED OR SUPPORTED BY THE U.S. ARE IN

ANGOLA, AND THEY SUSPECT THAT THERE ARE STRONG CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT IN THAT COUNTRY. ACCORDINGLY, U.S. ACCUSATIONS ABOUT CUBAN/SOVIET INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA ARE SEEN AS A CASE OF THE POT CALLING THE KETTLE BLACK--PARTICULARLY SO SOON AFTER THE END OF MASSIVE U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM. ON THE OTHER HAND, THOUGH SUCCESSIVE MEXICAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE REFUSED TO BREAK WITH CUBA AND THE ECHEVERRIA ADMINISTRATION HAS CHAMPIONED CUBA'S RETURN TO RESPECTABILITY IN THE HEMISPHERE, FEW MEXICANS AND CERTAINLY NOT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE WILLING TO TOLERATE ANY CUBAN ATTEMPT TO EXPORT REVOLUTION TO MEXICO. THUS MANY MEXICANS, INCLUDING ECHEVERRIA, MUST HAVE BEEN GIVEN PAUSE BY THE CUBAN WILLINGNESS AND CAPABILITY (WITH SOVIET HELP) TO FIELD A SIZABLE ARMY HALF THE WORLD AWAY. OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ON ANGOLA HAVE BEEN RARE AND RESTRAINED, BUT IN A RECENT SPEECH BY PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA HE REFERRED TO "BOLD" INTERVENTIONISTS

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SECRET

PAGE 02 MEXICO 01568 03 OF 03 051734Z

WHO DO NOT SEEM CONCERNED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF WAR--POSSIBLY A MAN-BITES-DOG REFERENCE TO CUBA.

G. MEXICO HAS BEEN A PRIME LEADER IN EFFORTS TO DEAL COLLECTIVELY WITH THE U.S. THROUGH THE OAS, THE SUSPENDED "DIALOGUE" WHICH BEGAN WITH THE TLATELOLCO CONFERENCE IN 1974, AND OTHER MULTILATERAL FORA. MEXICO HAS PUSHED HARD FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM (SELA). MEXICO HAS ALSO PURSUED SOME ESSENTIALLY BILATERAL OBJECTIVES (E.G., TREATMENT OF "UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANT WORKERS") IN MULTILATERAL MEETINGS. IN FACT, DEALING WITH THE U.S. FROM A COLLECTIVE POSITION, WHETHER REGIONAL OR THIRD WORLD, HAS BEEN A KEY MOTIF OF THE ECHEVERRIA FOREIGN POLICY. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE GOM HAS ESCHEWED BILATERAL DEALINGS WITH THE U.S., BUT RATHER THAT THE WEIGHT OF COLLECTIVE POSITIONS HAS, WHEN POSSIBLE, BEEN BROUGHT TO BEAR UPON THE PURSUIT OF BILATERAL OBJECTIVES. AND IN THOSE CASES WHERE THERE IS CONFLICT BETWEEN PERCEIVED MEXICAN INTERESTS AND THOSE OF THE THIRD WORLD, MEXICO LOOKS AFTER NUMBER ONE.

H. MEXICO'S VOTING POSITION IN MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS, PARTICULARLY THE UN, AND ON ISSUES OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO THE U.S. (E.G. KOREA, ZIONISM) HAS BEEN MOST TROUBLESOME. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THESE POSITIONS REFLECT CHANGED ATTITUDES ON THE PART OF PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND THE GOM AS A RESULT OF THE FACTORS MENTIONED IN PARA 3A OF REFTTEL. MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY HAD BEEN MOVING STEADILY AND CLEARLY TOWARD MORE CONSPICUOUS "INDEPENDENCE" OF THE U.S. FROM THE BEGINNING OF ECHEVERRIA'S TERM--BEFORE WATERGATE, BEFORE OUR WITHDRAWAL FROM VIETNAM.

I. ECHEVERRIA HAS MADE PERSISTENT, OVERT, MUCH-PUBLICIZED EFFORTS TO BROADEN THE RANGE OF MEXICO'S TRADING PARTNERS. THE REALITIES OF GEOGRAPHY AND OF EXISTING TRADE RELATIONSHIPS HAVE LARGELY THWARTED HIS EFFORTS. GIVEN THE PRESENT AND

LIKELY FUTURE STATE OF THE MEXICAN ECONOMY, SAPPED BY A GALLOPING BIRTH RATE, IT WOULD APPEAR AT THIS TIME THAT ANY FUTURE MEXICAN EFFORT TO REDUCE THE "FLOW OF CRITICAL RAW MATERIAL" TO THE U.S. WOULD BE ALMOST SUICIDAL--ON THE ORDER OF CUBA'S LOSS OF ITS SUGAR QUOTA. SIMILARLY, SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THE SALE OF U.S. PRODUCTS IN MEXICO WOULD HURT MEXICO AS MUCH AS THE U.S.

J. AS A RESULT OF U.S. OPPOSITION TO CERDS (OR PORTIONS THEREOF) AND TO VARIOUS CONCEPTS WHICH MEXICO AND LDC'S IN SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 MEXICO 01568 03 OF 03 051734Z

GENERAL CONSIDER ESSENTIAL TO A DEFENSE OF THEIR ECONOMIC INTERESTS), THE GOM SEEMS TO CONSIDER THE U.S. AS THE PRINCIPAL OPPONENT OF THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER. THUS MEXICO QUESTIONS THE UNITED STATES' WILLINGNESS ( BUT NOT ABILITY) TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD. BUT THIS IS THE PUBLIC, EXPRESSED VIEW OF THE GOM, AND THE FACT THAT MEXICO CONTINUES BOTH TO CRITICIZE AND TO APPEAL TO THE U.S. ON DEVELOPMENT ISSUES SUGGESTS THAT--RHETORIC ASIDE--THE GOM IS FAR FROM BELIEVING THAT THE U.S. IS UNALTERABLY OPPOSED TO MEETING LDC NEEDS OR THAT THE U.S. LACKS GOOD WILL TOWARD THE DEVELOPING WORLD. IT IS JUST THAT THE U.S. PROVIDES SUCH AN EXCELLENT TARGET AND SCAPEGOAT. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT MEXICO RETAINS A STRONG SENSITIVITY TOWARD THE QUESTION OF ANY U.S. BILATERAL DEVELOPMENTAL AID--PARTLY FOR ITS CHARITY ASSOCIATION, PARTLY FOR FEAR OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, PARTLY FOR FEAR OF INCREASING DEPENDENCE UPON THE U.S.

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